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Hardiman issues statement on welfare reform

LANSING – Sen. Bill Hardiman, chairman of the Family and Human Services Committee, issued the following statement tonight on the passage of the welfare reform act:

"I'm excited about this welfare package as it does three very important things. Most importantly it will help move individual welfare recipients toward self-sufficiency. It improves the system to help us meet federal work requirements and thus avoid millions of dollars in penalties. And it will hopefully help us reduce the welfare rolls to save the state money.

"I'm excited about the prospect of moving individuals toward self-sufficiency. Welfare was never meant to be a permanent condition and we need to break the cycle of dependency. We understand everyone needs a little help now and then so this package provides that while helping get recipients on their way to self-sufficiency."

Note:
The welfare reform package will:
- Provide better assessment of individuals;
- Require a family self-sufficiency plan to help guide families on the pathway to a better life;
- Impose sanctions for those who do not adhere to their plan; and
- Create a 48-month lifetime limit for cash assistance.

The package also:
- Provides exemptions for those who are mentally, emotionally or physically disabled;
- Includes a provision that will encourage recipients to increase their hours and seek higher paying jobs by allowing them to keep more of the money they earn.

- Stops the 48-month clock for those who are working and adhering to their family self-sufficiency plan; and
- Provides the ability for the director of the Department of Human Services to exempt those who have extenuating circumstances and can't meet their goals.

The bills in the package are Senate Bills 1500 and 1501 and House Bills 6580 and 6587.

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